

The Examination of Relationship between Social Support, Social Self-efficacy and Submissive Behavior

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Abstract: The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between social support, social self-efficacy and submissive behavior. Participants were 317 university students who completed a questionnaire package that included the Submissive Behavior Scale, the Social Self-efficacy Scale and the Multidimensional Scale for Social Support. The data were tested by correlational analysis. According to results; submissive behavior was related positively to social support and negatively to social self-efficacy. Results were discussed in the light of literature.

Introduction

Submissive behavior is a set of observable personality traits which involve avoiding to break others, trying to make everyone happy, being inclined to be very helpful, having difficulty with expressing the conditions s/he does not approve, having difficulty with expressing his/her anger, having difficulty with saying “no” and being inclined to say “yes”, feeling the urge for continuous approval, being unable to defend their rights and thoughts (Göktuna, 2007). behaviors which start in an early age of childhood is a desired and admired feature as unconditional submission to orders of the state and authority in the local culture (Cüceloğlu, 2003) and in other words is dominant in the interpersonal relationships in Eastern culture rather than Western culture (Yildirim, 2003). There are cultural differences in the ways of submission. Some cultures give more importance to submission than other cultures (Karaoğlu, 2007). Individuals who feel themselves to be low rank, with a tendency to behave submissively, may be more self-focused to ensure monitoring of expressed behavior (Cheung, Gilbert, Irons, 2003). There are views, which suggest that submission is emerged with the effect of imitation and learning from a model. As it is in many behavior types, an individual may be inclined to act the way he observed in someone else.

It was found that submission is more frequently observed in those who live in the nuclear family and males. Even if it is accepted that women are exposed to more violence and pressure in a male dominant social structure, it is a wonder that males are more inclined to develop conformist behavior (Kaya, Güneş, Kaya, Pehlivan, 2004). Based on findings on different researches, one can assume that dominance is more male-typed whereas submissiveness is more female-typed. However, this interpretation is only speculative and the gender-typed nature of dominant and submissive acts has yet to be clearly ascertained (McCreary & Rhodes, 2001).

democracies, it is possible and expected not to be conformist; in totalitarian systems only a few outlaw heroes and people fighting for an aim are expected to reject submission. But despite this difference, conformism is observed in the overwhelming majority in a democratic society. The reason for this lies in the fact of having to find an answer for the concept of unity or be a part of the group by conforming if a better solution cannot be found. If the core of necessity of thinking differently is understood, the strength of the fear of being different and

being a few steps away from the flock may be understood. Fear of not being conformist turns into a potential threat of the fear of practical principles in the mind of the nonconformist. But in reality, people, at least in Western democracies, are more willing to conform than they are compelled to act so (Fromm, 1998).

Gilbert et al (2003) claim that submissive behavior is then a tactic of defense and not a personal judgment. Apsler (1975) found that humiliating people and making them anxious increases submission. According to this, the reason of increase in submission results from the fear that person's fault will be displayed or the willing to get rid of the uneasiness rather than the self-anxiety of showing himself/herself better in public (Freedman, Sears, Carlsmith, 1993). Lewis and Michalson (1983) one of the four factors in the emergence of anger is to have to obey the orders and sanctions or pressure or force to do something that the individual does not want to (Özmen, 2006). This condition constitutes an important factor in the deterioration of mental health of people. Studies conducted revealed significant relations between submissive behavior and depression (Gilbert, 2000; Gilbert, Cheung, Grandfield, Campey, Irons, 2003).

Social support attributes to the supportive behaviors and resources of our social ties, including emotional support, intimacy, positive interaction, and tangible support (House, 1981; Williams et al, 2008). It can include emotional support, instrumental support, appraisal support, and informational support (House, 1981; Glazer, 2006). Social support has a positive influence on the ability to cope with negative life events. The beneficial effects of social support may occur through protecting individuals from the harmful effects of stress (Lakey & Cohen, 2000), contributing to adjustment and development (Clark, 1991), raising self-esteem (Lakey & Cassady, 1990; Kinnunen, Feldt, Kinnunen, Pulkkinen, 2008), and well-being (Sarason, Pierce, & Sarason, 1990; Cohen, & Wills, 1985). It reduces the intensity of the post-traumatic reactions and predicts better overall adjustment following a traumatic experience (Keppel-Benson, Ollendick, & Benson, 2002; Neria, Solomon, & Dekel, 1998), symptoms of distress and psychopathology (Lindorff, 2000), and symptoms of illness (Dolbier & Steinhardt, 2000). Studies about social support have shown significant relations between lower social support and depression (Keiley, Lofthouse, Bates, Dodge, & Petit, 2003; Young, Berenson, Cohen, & Garcia, 2005), conduct problems (Appleyard, Egeland, & Sroufe, 2007), academic performance (Heard, 2007), and depressive symptoms and hopelessness (Yang, & Clum, 1994).

Social self-efficacy, one aspect of effective social skills, refers to a readiness to initiate behavior in social conditions (Sherer & Adams, 1983; Smith & Betz, 2000) and it also can be considered as the student's expectancy that they can successfully perform or complete a target behavior in an academic or everyday situation involving social interaction (Connolly, 1989; Gresham, 1984). It is important not only in its possible relationship to effective social behavior but also it has been widely applied to psychological adjustment and mental health. Social self-efficacy skills mediated the relationship between stressful life events and depressive symptoms (Maciejewski, Prigerson, & Mazure, 2000). It has been consistently shown to be related to higher levels of global self-esteem (Connolly, 1989; Hermann & Betz, 2004, 2006; Smith & Betz, 2002). Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996) found that social self-efficacy was related to the emotional well-being of high school students. Research has also indicated that lower levels of social self-efficacy are related to higher levels of depression (Hermann & Betz, 2004, 2006; Smith & Betz, 2002), attachment anxiety (Mallinckrodt & Wei, 2005) and positively related to loneliness and social dissatisfaction (Galanaki & Kalantzi-Azizi, 1999).

1. Method

1.1. Participants

Participants were 317 university students enrolled in various undergraduate programs at Sakarya University, Turkey. Of the participants, 91 were first-year students, 67 were second-year students, 79 were third-year students, and 80 were fourth-year students. One hundred and fifty-two of the participants (48%) were females and 165 (52%) were males. A large majority of the students (94%) were between 17 and 22 years of age.

1.2. Measures

Submissive behaviors were measured by Submissive Acts Scale (SAS, Gilbert & Allan, 1994). Turkish adaptation of the SAS had been done by Şahin and Şahin (1992). The adolescents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with each statement on a 5-point scale ranging from this is a very bad description of me to

this is a very good description of me. The scale consists of 16 items (e.g., “Even if I don’t like it, I do things just because other people are also doing them.” and, “I allow other people to criticize and let me down and do not defend myself.”).

The Perceived Social Self-efficacy Scale (PSSS) was developed by [Smith and Betz \(2000\)](#) and contains 25 items on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). A sum of all scores yields a total score that ranges from 25 to 125; higher scores indicate higher level social self-efficacy. Turkish adaptation of this scale had been done by [Palanci \(2004\)](#). The Cronbach a internal consistency coefficient of the adapted Turkish form was .89. For test–retest reliability the scale was administered to 100 undergraduate students twice in 4 weeks. The Pearson correlation coefficient was .68.

Social support was measured using Turkish version of the Multidimensional Scale for Social Support (MSPSS, Zimet et al., 1988; Eker, Arkar, 1995). The MSPSS consists of 12 items on a 7-point Likert scale, from not suitable at all (1) to very suitable (7). The students’ self reports also provided scores on three subscales, each subscale comprising four items:

(a) family social support subscale, containing items such as “I can discuss my problems with my family” and “I get help and emotional support from my family”;

(b) friends’ support, consisting of items such as “I have friends with whom I can share my happiness and pain” and “I can count on my friends when problems arise”;

(c) the significant other’s support, with items such as “I have a close person who can encourage me” and “I have a close person who supports me when I am in need”.

Scores for each of this scale range from 12 to 84, where a higher score expresses higher social support.

2. Results

2.1. Descriptive Data and Inter-correlations

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that there are correlations between submissive behavior, social self-efficacy and social support. Submissive behavior related positively to social support ($r = .11$) and negatively to social self-efficacy ($r = -.51$).

Variables	1	2	3
1. Submissive behavior	1.00		
2. Social self-efficacy	-.51**	1.00	
3. Social support	.11*	-.09	1.00
Mean	51.30	77.86	60.98
Standard deviation	7.49	10.56	14.57
**p<.001, *p<.01			

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Inter-correlations of the Variables

2.2. Gender differences

When Table 2 is examined, there were no significant gender differences in submissive behavior, social self-efficacy and social support.

Variable	Females (N=152)		Males (N=165)			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
Submissive behavior	51.52	6.79	51.09	8.10	.60	.61
Social self-efficacy	77.86	11.15	79.55	9.96	-1.42	.15
Social support	60.98	14.83	61.32	14.37	-.21	.83
*** $p < 0.001$						

Table 2: Gender Differences in Submissive Behavior, Social Self-efficacy and Social Support

3. Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between social support, social self-efficacy and submissive behavior. Findings have demonstrated that there are relationships among these variables. Firstly, as hypothesized, submissive behavior predicted social self-efficacy negatively and social support positively. Recent studies on lower levels of social self-efficacy are related to higher levels of depression (Hermann & Betz, 2004, 2006; Smith & Betz, 2002), attachment anxiety (Mallinckrodt & Wei, 2005) and positively related to loneliness and social dissatisfaction (Galanaki & Kalantzi-Azizi, 1999) and emotional well-being (Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). Similarly, higher social support was found associated positively with well-being (Zimet et al, 1988) and negatively with depression (Keiley et al, 2003; Young et al, 2005), conduct problems (Appleyard et al, 2007), academic performance (Heard, 2007), depressive symptoms and hopelessness (Yang, & Clum, 1994).

Research findings have demonstrated that there are no gender differences among social support, social self-efficacy and submissive behavior. The gender-typed nature of dominant and submissive acts has yet to be clearly ascertained (McCreary & Rhodes, 2001).

This study has several implications for future research. Firstly, further research investigating the relationships between social support, social self-efficacy and submissive behavior, and other psychological constructs are needed, to reinforce the findings of this study. In addition interventions focused on increasing social support and social self-efficacy can be useful in decreasing submissive behavior.

This study has several limitations. First, participants were university students and replication of this study for targeting other student populations should be made in order to generate a more solid relationship among constructs examined in this study, because generalization of the results is somewhat limited. Second, the data reported here for social support, social self-efficacy and submissive behavior are limited to self reported data. So, the current findings increase our understanding of the relationships social support, social self-efficacy and submissive behavior.

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